

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



LATE

KENNETH S. HARA
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL

STEPHEN F. LOGAN
COLONEL
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 959
RELATING TO HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD

PRESENTATION TO
THE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS, MILITARY, & VETERANS

BY

MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH S. HARA
ADJUTANT GENERAL
DIRECTOR OF THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
AND HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISOR

FEBRUARY 2, 2021

Chair Ohno, Vice Chair Ganaden, and Members of the Committee on Corrections, Military, & Veterans.

I am Major General Kenneth Hara, Adjutant General, Director of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security Advisor.

The Department of Defense (DOD) provides written testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 959.

This measure, if passed would, authorize the Hawaii National Guard to provide health insurance coverage for our personnel who are called to active duty in the service of the State of Hawaii. During periods when our Guardsmen and women are activated for more than thirty days, most will have no medical insurance for routine medical care for them or their families as only they are covered for injuries or illnesses incurred in the line of duty through the State of Hawaii Workers' Compensation benefits. This inability to provide routine medical care for our service members and their families as they serve the citizens of our state, and thus risk possible lapse in medical insurance coverage makes it challenging for service members volunteering for long-term activations. Typically, should an issue arise which requires medical treatment, there is a danger of great personal and financial hardship for the Guardsmen and women unless they have employer provided health insurance benefits; most employers do not have the financial capacity to continue to provide these benefits during a long-term activation of those personnel – our service member and their employee.

Over the past five years, the use of the Hawaii National Guard has been extensive. From the numerous natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes, and lava eruptions to our most recent challenges of a nation-wide pandemic and the prospect of civil unrest, the recent use of our Hawaii National Guard personnel is unprecedented. This bill would authorize the Hawaii National Guard to fund the premium payments for Tricare Reserve Select or other government provided medical coverage with a minimal cost to the State due to the typical 75% FEMA reimbursement for the personnel costs associated with state active duty activations. Using

Tricare Reserve Select as an example with premiums of \$45/month (self) and \$230/month (family), the non-reimbursable cost to the state would be approximately \$11.25/month (self) and \$57.50/month (family); these are reasonable costs to ensure the Hawaii National Guard is able to provide the necessary personnel to respond to our state emergencies while at the same time, ensuring the families of these personnel and the serving service members are cared for adequately and can continue to have their routine medical needs met. It should not be financially detrimental for one of our own to serve.

One Clarifications should be noted. The bill indicates funding will come from the General Fund. More specifically, the funding will be through the Major Disaster Fund.

Passing this bill would ease this potential financial burden for our Guardsmen and women, and assist the Hawaii National Guard in providing the necessary personnel to be responsive to our State and serve our citizens.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in Strong Support of HB 959.

MG Kenneth S. Hara, kenneth.s.hara.mil@mail.mil; 808-672-1211
Colonel Pamela Ellison, pamela.i.ellison10.mil@mail.mil, 808-672-1254